

COMMEMORATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL'S NATIONHOOD

**HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 19, 2008*

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise to mark Israel's 60th year of nationhood. As a cochair of the Democratic Israel Working Group I am proud to join my colleagues to celebrate the importance of America's relationship with Israel and to commemorate the founding of our trusted ally in the Middle East.

On May 14, 1948, the nation of Israel was born, bringing Jewish refugees from all over the world together, under one unified flag, providing a permanent home for a people persecuted throughout history.

For 60 years, the United States has enjoyed Israel's trusted friendship and support. Our peoples have worked together to promote respect, stability, and prosperity.

As we reflect on the significance and importance of Israel's 60 years of existence, we should not forget there is still much work to be done and many goals to be accomplished.

I ask my colleagues to join me in ushering in Israel's 60th anniversary.

IN HONOR OF JOHN CHALLIS

**HON. JASON ALTMIRE**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 19, 2008*

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor John Challis. This young man is an inspiration to me and to the citizens of my district. He is a senior at Freedom High School in Freedom, Pennsylvania and was diagnosed with liver cancer almost two years ago. He recently learned his illness is terminal.

Although doctors have told him the "cancer is winning right now," his spirit and faith has not wavered. With wisdom far beyond his years, he recently told a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reporter, "I used to be afraid, but I'm not afraid of dying now . . . Because life ain't about how many breaths you take. It's what you do with those breaths."

Even though the cancer has ravaged his body, this courageous young man continues to hunt; in the last year he got three bucks and two doe. He also continues to play his favorite sports, baseball and football.

A few weeks ago, John was able to fulfill one of his wishes. In one of the final baseball games of the season, his coach and friend, Steve Wetzel, called him into the game to pinch-hit. Even though he has not played in several years, he took one swing and sent a line drive into right field. As he struggled to first-base, he found encouragement in his first-base coach, who was crying, and the opposing team and crowd who were applauding and cheering him on. As he reached first base, he shouted "I did it! I did it!" Throughout his fight with cancer, John has remained positive. He does not worry about himself, but focuses more on his family and friends. His father Scott has sat with him many nights discussing John's advice for the future.

John explained to an ESPN reporter how he feels about the situation and his concerns for

his family. He said, "it's harder for [my family] than it is for me. I mean, my mom's gonna lose her son. What am I going to lose? . . . It's harder on her than it is going to be for anybody. If I'm afraid of anything, that's what I'm afraid of."

Coach Wetzel recently organized a "Walk for a Champion" fundraiser to help fulfill one of John's wishes—a vacation with his mom, dad and his 14 year-old sister, Alexis. This was his way of giving back to a young man who has given him so much.

Coach Wetzel hoped 100 people would come to the fundraiser. In fact, over 500 people participated in the walk-a-thon in the pouring rain and the original fundraising goal of \$6,000 was easily surpassed. John and his family are now preparing for a cruise in June.

John continues to inspire those who know him and many who have recently learned about his story. After being interviewed by Mike White of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, John's story has touched people throughout the country and even members of the military serving overseas. Mike White recently discussed his article about John and said "I have received literally hundreds of e-mails from people saying how John is inspiring and how John has affected their lives."

John's story has also gained the attention of the national sports media, as well as many professional athletes. The Pittsburgh Penguins recently honored John by inviting him and his family to a playoff game against the Philadelphia Flyers where they watched the game in the Mario Lemieux suite. While watching the game John was greeted by Mario Lemieux; Steelers chairman Dan Rooney; Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger; and Atlanta Braves' pitchers Tom Glavine and John Smoltz. After meeting the athletes John said "my head is spinning. This week has just been incredible and now this. It was like someone dropped me off at the wrong party."

John's spirit, grace and courage are truly an inspiration to me and many around the country. This young man has done more with his 18 years than most people do in a lifetime.

Even in this difficult time, he continues to be selfless and put others before himself. John, his family, and Coach Wetzel are setting up a foundation in John's name for young cancer patients. Of the foundation, John said "maybe it will help younger people who haven't gotten to see the finer things in life that I got to see."

John Challis is truly a role model and not only for the constituents in my district, but for the people all across this nation.

HONORING THE LIFE AND  
MEMORY OF MR. JERRY TRUMPKA

**HON. THADDEUS G. MCCOTTER**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 19, 2008*

Mr. MCCOTTER. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor Jerry Trumpka, a treasured community leader, and mourn him upon his passing at age 57.

Jerry Trumpka was a founding member and president of the Plymouth A.M. Rotary Club. Jerry contracted polio at the age of nine. Mr. Trumpka used his struggle with the disease as an inspiration to assist his local community, our Nation, and worldwide efforts to provide

comfort to families and victims of polio and help eliminate the disease. The Rotary Club, which is an international organization, has made its main focus since 1985 to eradicate polio worldwide. Jerry was honored to become President of the Club in 2003. Mr. Trumpka was instrumental to the development of the Sandra Sagar award, named after a local high school student who overcame the challenges of living with polio. Mr. Trumpka helped to initiate the award and \$500 scholarships in Sagar's name and assisted in the construction of a memory wall honoring the recipients of the award. Jerry was known as a quiet giver both through his leadership in the Rotary Club and in his position as the operations associate at the Plymouth Community United Way office. Mr. Trumpka was also known for his involvement in the political community as a Republican activist.

Tragically, Jerry passed away from a heart attack. Jerry will be cherished as a devoted husband and father. To his wife, Becky; his daughter, Toni; and to everyone who knew and loved him, Jerry was a dedicated member of his community who will be truly missed.

Madam Speaker, during his lifetime, Mr. Jerry Trumpka enriched the lives of everyone around him by exhibiting vigor, leadership, and spirit. As we bid farewell to this outstanding individual, I ask my colleagues to join me in mourning his passing and honoring his many years of loyal service to the community and our country.

HONORING PIONEER MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

**HON. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 19, 2008*

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to honor a respected and rising school, which is setting the standard for education in western New York.

Pioneer Middle School, a member of the Pioneer Central School District in Yorkshire, NY, has recently been recognized as one of the "Essential Elements: Schools to Watch". Pioneer Middle School is 1 of only 2 schools in the State of New York to be recognized with this prestigious honor and 1 of only 47 schools recognized nationwide.

The "Essential Elements: Schools to Watch" program was established to recognize and publicize effective schools that are committed to academic excellence, social equity, developmental responsiveness, and strong organization, structure, and process.

Pioneer Middle School's achievement should be applauded and is especially significant since the school was once identified as a "School in Need of Improvement" by the New York State Department of Education in 2004. The school's quick turnaround and its vast improvement are a result of strong administrative leadership and the diligent work faculty and staff. Also the parents and most importantly, the students of Pioneer Middle School, deserve to be recognized for this outstanding accomplishment.

Pioneer Middle School is not only a model for schools around western New York; it is a model for schools across the country, as well.

Madam Speaker, in recognition of this school's tremendous improvement and its